

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend the claims as indicated:

1-9. canceled

1 10. (previously presented) A method for collecting reports of at least one
2 parameter comprising the following steps:
3 all in a central computer system:
4 automatically receiving from any of a plurality of arbitrary senders, via a
5 publicly accessible transmission channel, an electronic representation of an image of a
6 physical form, the form having a plurality of data fields, each corresponding to an
7 indicator, which may be alphanumeric, of at least a partial value of at least one of the
8 parameters;
9 automatically and uniquely identifying the physical form from the electronic
10 representation of its received image;
11 automatically identifying the location of the data fields in the received
12 representation of the image of the form by comparing the received electronic
13 representation of the image of the physical form with at least one pre-stored electronic
14 representation of at least one template;
15 automatically extracting from the identified data fields the at least partial
16 values of the corresponding parameters; and
17 automatically storing the extracted values in a predetermined format in a
18 memory for subsequent processing as well as the representation of the received
19 physical form as it was received; and
20 transferring the stored extracted values to an external recipient via a
21 network, all processing of the physical form after transmission by the sender up to and
22 including transfer to the external recipient via the network thereby taking place
23 automatically;
24 in which:

25 the electronic representation of the image of the physical form is generated using
26 a standard, conventional facsimile machine, whereby the transmission channel is a
27 standard telephone line and the central computer system is separate from the facsimile
28 machine other than through its connection via the transmission channel;

29 each data field indicates a quantifiable or itemizable value of a corresponding
30 one of the parameters, further including the additional step of storing the received
31 electronic representation of the image of the physical form in the memory, whereby non-
32 quantifiable and non-itemizable entries by the user onto the physical form are made
33 available for subsequent review;

34 the step of automatically identifying the location of the data fields comprises the
35 following sub-steps:

36 storing an electronic representation of a template of each of a plurality of
37 physical forms;

38 automatically identifying each received form by performing a best-fit
39 comparison of each received electronic representation of the image of the
40 corresponding physical form with the stored electronic representations of the templates;

41 automatically registering the received electronic representation of the
42 received physical form image with the best-fit electronic template representation; and

43 matching the data fields in the received electronic representation of the
44 received physical form image with corresponding data fields in the best-fit electronic
45 template representation.

11-13. canceled